

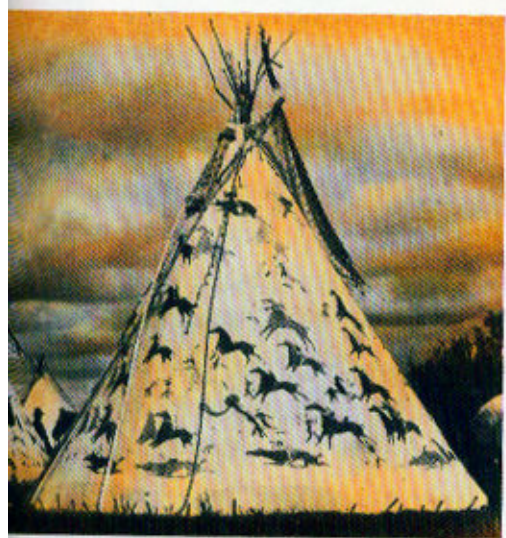
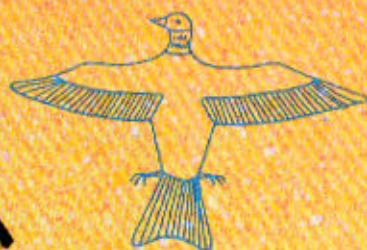
MEET ROSEBUD YELLOW ROBE

When Rosebud Yellow Robe was young, her parents told her the stories of her people, the Lakota-oyate. Children were expected to memorize the stories and pass them on to their own children.

Yellow Robe, however, has passed these tales on to a much wider audience. Through her books *Tonweya and the Eagles and Other Lakota Indian Tales* and *The Album of the American Indian*, through her appearances on radio and television, and through her visits to schools and libraries, she has shared her stories with the world.



TONWEYA AND THE EAGLES



▲▼ Native Americans crafted many items of both beauty and utility. At far left, an Oglala Sioux love flute shaped like the bird whose song it echoes. Next to it, a Sioux painted shield. On this page, the teepee of Old Bull is covered with a winter count, and below is shown a scene from High Hawk's Winter Count. A winter count shows a pictorial history of the Sioux.



RETOLD BY
ROSEBUD YELLOW ROBE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
RICHARD RED OWL

FOREWORD

This story was told to me by my father, Canowicakte. Canowicakte was the boy Chano. Chano was a shortened name used for him. The *c* is pronounced like a *ch*, and the *a* as in *ah*.

My father was born in the southern part of what is now Montana. He lived with his people, the Lakota-oyate, or Sioux nation, roaming the Plains of what are now South Dakota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming, and Montana. My grandfather was named Tasinagi, or Yellow Robe. He was the son of a hereditary chief. He had won his title to chieftainship as a fearless warrior and great hunter. He too



was a leader of his people. My grandmother was named Tahcawin, meaning fawn or female deer. My father was her favorite child because he was her firstborn.

When my father was an infant, my grandfather Tasinagi and my grandmother Tahcawin gave a huge feast for the great men of the tribe in his honor. At that time he was named Canowicakte, meaning kill-in-the-woods. The lobes of both his ears were pierced so that he might wear earrings. Tasinagi gave away two of his best ponies.

Canowicakte spent many hours in the tipi of his grandfather and grandmother. They were his tutors in legends and history of the tribe. He was expected to memorize all these stories so that he in turn would be able to relate them to his children. He was taught respect and reverence for Wakan-tanka, the Great Mystery. He learned of the great and inspiring deeds of the famous chiefs, warriors, and medicine men. He was trained in the old customs of how to make bows and arrows for hunting and for wars. He learned to ride ponies bareback. He learned how to hunt deer and buffalo. He enjoyed

wrestling, swimming, and foot-racing with his companions.

Often Canowicakte followed his father on his hunting trips and learned how to kill a deer or elk and drag it back to camp over the prairie.

Living so close to nature he became familiar with the characteristics and habits of the animals and birds. He knew that his people did not kill buffalo or other game for pleasure. They killed only for use.

He saw his first white man when his parents made camp near one of the trading posts along the Missouri River. He was playing near the camp with his brother when he saw a creature coming toward them. It had long fair hair and a beard and was wearing a large hat and a fringed buckskin suit. It carried a musket on its shoulder. Chano couldn't decide if it was a man or an animal of some kind. As the creature came near the boys, Chano decided it was an evil spirit. For the first time in his life his bravery failed him. He screamed, and leaving his brother behind, he ran to his father in the tipi. His father laughed when he heard the story of the evil spirit. He told Chano he had seen a white man. He told the boys not to go



▲▲ Standing proudly is the father of Chano, Chief Yellow Robe. Above left is the buffalo, a much revered creature of the Sioux. Below it is a Sioux painted buffalo robe featuring a standard sunburst design.



very far away or the white man would kidnap them.

Chano remembered warriors coming back and telling exciting tales of their battles with the white men who promised to stay away from the Lakota-oyate lands but who were always forgetting their promises.

When Chano was about fifteen years old, his dreams of glory in an Indian world vanished. General R. H. Pratt came to the headmen of the tribe and asked them to send one of their children east to a school called Carlisle. He told them that life would change rapidly for them. The buffalo were being killed off and reservations were being formed. He explained that the leaders should know about the new world so different from the Indian way of living.

Against his will my father was given to General Pratt to go away to Carlisle. I have pictures of my father taken when he first arrived at the school with skin clothing, moccasins, and long hair. Then pictures when his clothing had been taken away and he was given the uniform of the school to wear. His hair was cut short. For a long time he thought his mother had died. He had been

the first taken to the barber to have his hair cut. Among the Sioux it is a sign of mourning to do so. He thought the other boys were mourning her too, as they had their hair cut.

The children were not allowed to speak their own language, only English, and many weeks had passed by before my father learned that his mother was still alive.

The teachers were very kind to him, but until he learned the language and understood them, he did not trust them. He was a good student. He took part in all the athletics and played on the football team. During the summers he worked on the farms. He also attended the Moody Institute summer school at Northfield, Massachusetts.

Before he left Carlisle, Chauncey Yellow Robe, which was now Canowicakte's name, was chosen to represent the North American Indians at the Congress of Nations at the opening of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago.

Canowicakte graduated with honors with the class of 1895. Shortly thereafter he entered government service and spent the greater part of his life at various Indian schools. He was for many



▲▼ Chauncey Yellow Robe shown before and after his entrance to the Carlisle Indian School. Below are a Sioux rawhide painting and a painted wooden horse.





years at the large nonreservation boarding school at Rapid City, South Dakota.

At Rapid City my father met my mother. They fell in love and were married and continued living and working there. My father was disappointed that he did not have a son but soon reconciled himself to his three daughters.

We were very lucky to have parents who taught us about our cultural background and who tried as the Lakotas had for generations to tell us the stories they had heard in their youth. After they were dead, I found several of the stories written out in my mother's and father's handwriting.

My father became very well known for his activities, first with The Society of American Indians. He was much sought after by many organizations as a speaker and soon became known as a "bridge between two cultures."

He spoke out many times critically, and in such a way that he was considered a spokesman for the Sioux.

My father presided at the ceremonies at Deadwood, South Dakota, when the Sioux inducted President Calvin Coolidge into the tribe.

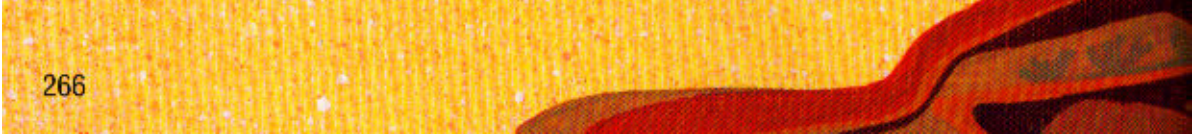
Despite his distaste for the way in which the American Indian

was depicted in movies he was persuaded to play a leading role in *The Silent Enemy*, written and produced by Douglas Burden, a trustee of the American Museum of Natural History. This was the first movie produced with an all-Indian cast and no professional actors. It was the story of the Ojibways' struggle against their silent enemy, hunger.

During this time he was also running for Congress in his home state of South Dakota.

He did the talking prologue for the picture *The Silent Enemy*; since the prologue was made in New York City studios, it was last to be filmed. During that time he caught a cold that became pneumonia. He died at the Rockefeller Institute Hospital after a brief illness.

Shortly after my father's death President Coolidge, usually a man of few words, wrote a wonderful tribute to him. In part he said, "He represented a trained and intelligent contact between two different races. He was a born leader who realized that the destiny of the Indian is indissolubly bound up with the destiny of our country. His loyalty to his tribe and his people made him a most patriotic American."



TONWEYA AND THE EAGLES



Everyone was excited. It was the Month of Grass Appearing, and the whole camp was busy getting ready to move over the plains to a new home. They would be close to more game and they looked forward to the move. Everyone that is except Chano. He loved this camping spot and already felt lonely for the distant hills.

Tahcawin had packed the parfleche cases with clothing and food and strapped them to a travois made of two trailing poles with a skin net stretched between them. Another travois lay on the ground ready for the new tipi.

Chano was very happy when Tasinagi suggested the three of them ride up to their favorite hills for the last time.

As the three of them rode along, Tasinagi called Chano's attention to the two large birds circling overhead. They were Wanbli, the eagle. Chano knew they were sacred to his people and that they must never be killed.

He looked at the eagle feather in his father's hair, a sign of bravery, and wondered why it was that the Lakotas as well as many other Indians held Wanbli, the eagle, in





such great respect. Someday he would ask his father about this.

The two eagles they were watching did not seem afraid of the three travelers. They flew nearer and nearer, swooping down in ever narrowing circles. They seemed to be trying to attract the attention of the travelers.

Suddenly Chano called out, "Look, Ate! The feathers on their wings are tipped with red. I never knew that Wanbli had red feathers!"

"Are you sure of this, my son?" Tasinagi asked.

"Yes, Father. Both birds had tips of bright red on their wings."

"Tahcawin," said Tasinagi, "our son has been favored by the sight of the sacred birds of Tonweya. Few have seen them and it is a sign of good for him."

"What do you mean, Ate?" asked Chano. "What are the sacred birds of Tonweya?"

"They are the eagles who saved Tonweya's life many, many snows ago. Tonweya was a great chief and a great medicine man."

Chano immediately begged his father to tell him the story. Tasinagi motioned for Chano to ride by his side and began:

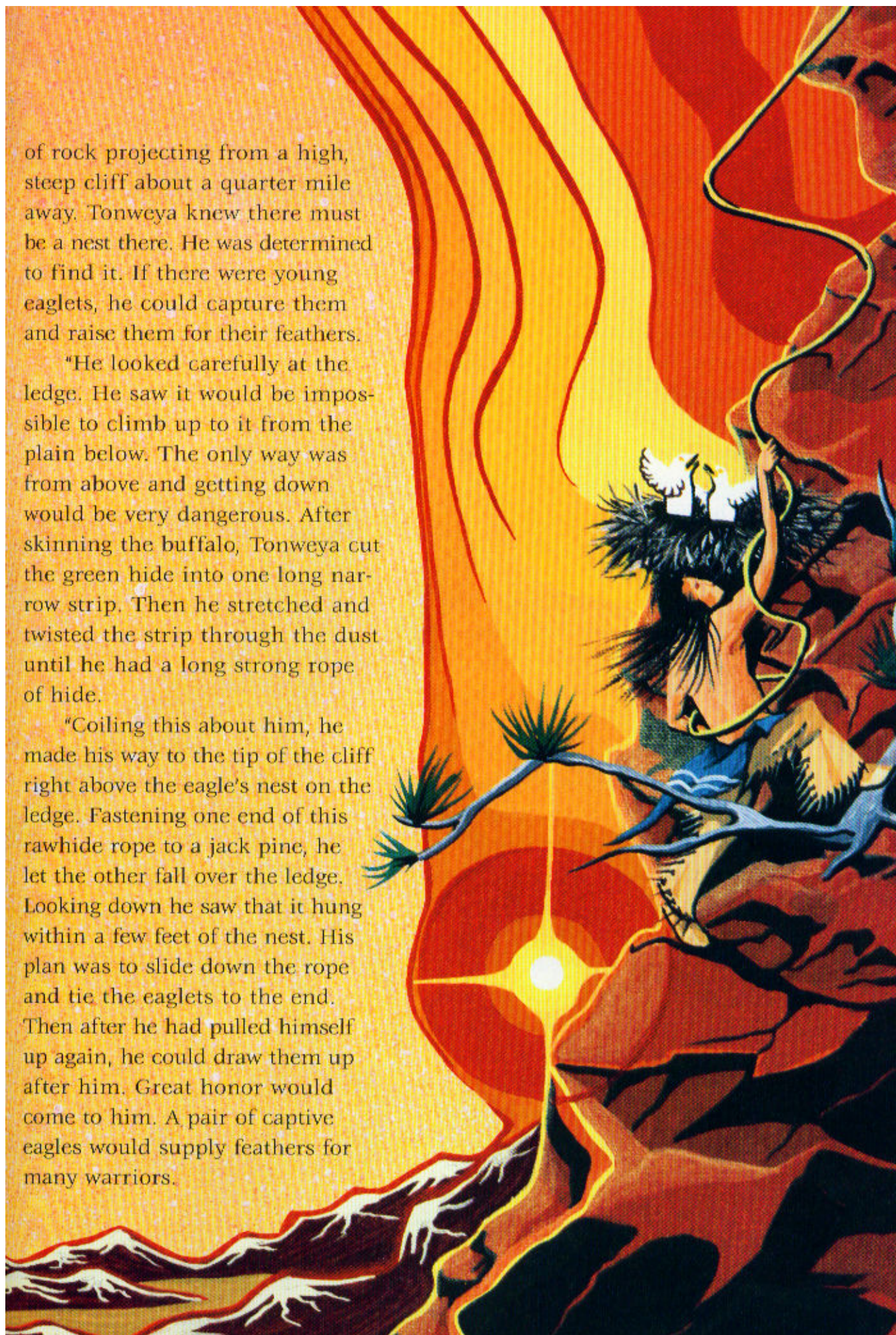
"It was the summer when the big ball of fire fell from the sky. A band of Lakotas were camping just about where we are now. Among them was a young man whose name was Tonweya. He was not only good to look upon, but he was a great runner and hunter. He was very brave in the face of danger. Everyone said that someday he would be a chief. Brave and good chiefs are always needed in every tribe.

"One day Tonweya went out hunting. He found a small herd of buffalo grazing near the hills and picking out a young fat cow sent an arrow straight into her heart. While he was skinning the buffalo, he noticed a large eagle circling above him. Watching her flight he saw that she settled on a ledge

of rock projecting from a high, steep cliff about a quarter mile away. Tonweya knew there must be a nest there. He was determined to find it. If there were young eaglets, he could capture them and raise them for their feathers.

"He looked carefully at the ledge. He saw it would be impossible to climb up to it from the plain below. The only way was from above and getting down would be very dangerous. After skinning the buffalo, Tonweya cut the green hide into one long narrow strip. Then he stretched and twisted the strip through the dust until he had a long strong rope of hide.

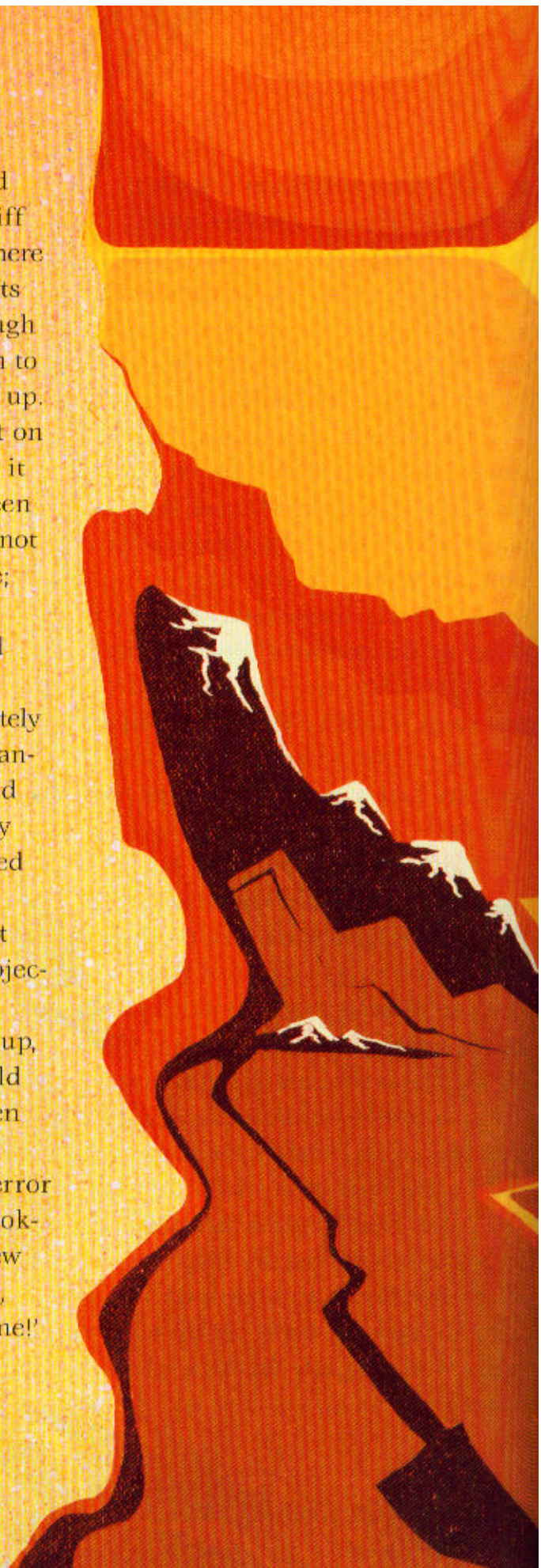
"Coiling this about him, he made his way to the tip of the cliff right above the eagle's nest on the ledge. Fastening one end of this rawhide rope to a jack pine, he let the other fall over the ledge. Looking down he saw that it hung within a few feet of the nest. His plan was to slide down the rope and tie the eaglets to the end. Then after he had pulled himself up again, he could draw them up after him. Great honor would come to him. A pair of captive eagles would supply feathers for many warriors.

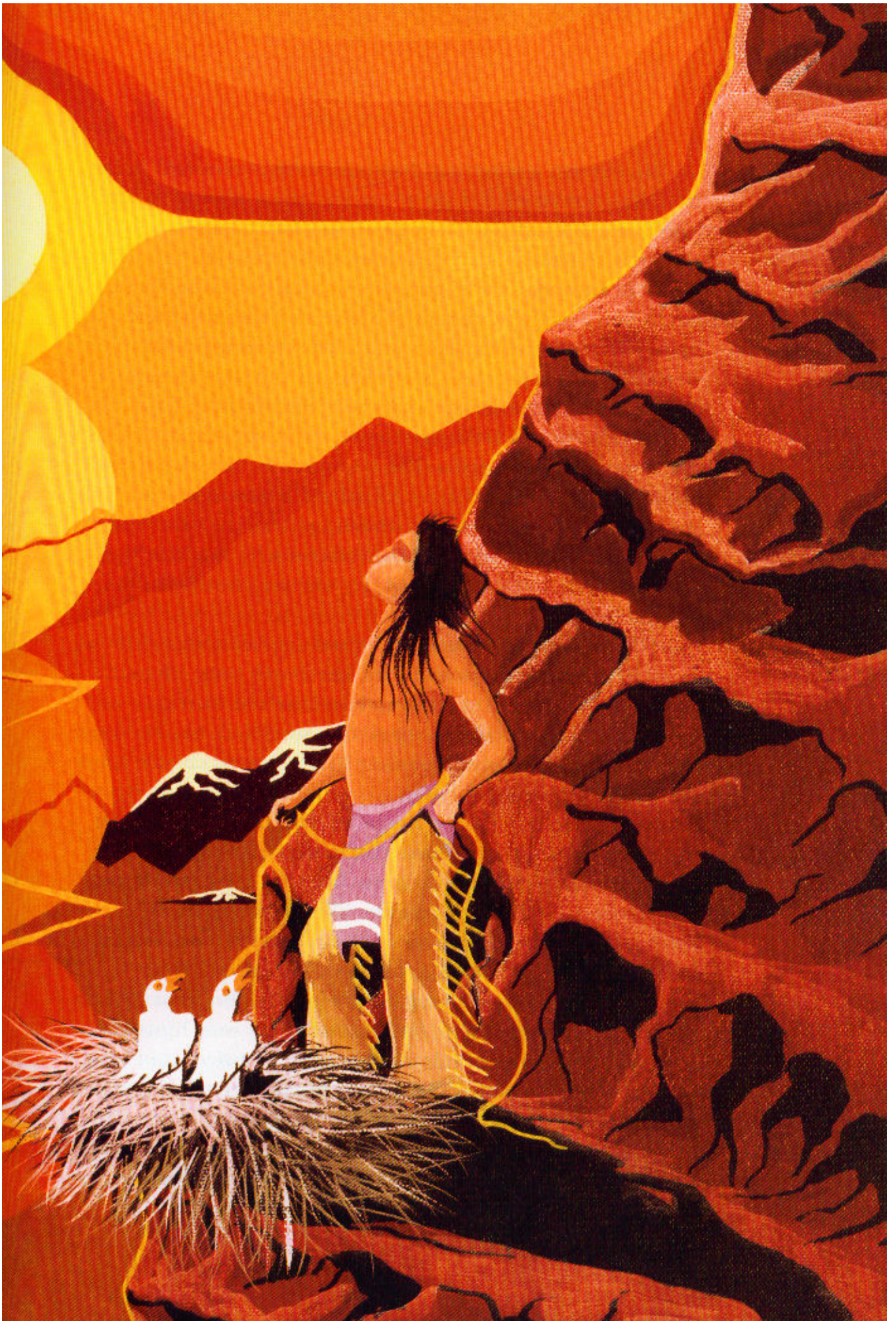


"Tonweya carefully lowered himself over the edge of the cliff and soon stood on the ledge. There were two beautiful young eaglets in the nest, full feathered, though not yet able to fly. He tied them to his rope and prepared to climb up. But just as he placed his weight on the rope, to his great surprise it fell down beside him. The green hide had been slipping at the knot where he had tied it to the tree; when he pulled on it to go up again, the knot came loose and down came the rope.

"Tonweya realized immediately that he was trapped. Only Wakan-tanka, the Great Mystery, could save him from a slow death by starvation and thirst. He looked below him. There was a sheer drop of many hundreds of feet with not even the slightest projection by which he might climb down. When he tried to climb up, he could find neither handhold nor foothold. Warbli had chosen well the place for a nest.

"Despite his brave heart terror gripped Tonweya. He stood looking off in the direction he knew his people to be. He cried out, '*Ma hiyopo! Ma hiyopo!* Help me!' but only the echo of his own voice answered.





"As the sun was setting, the mother eagle returned to her nest. She screamed in rage when she saw a man with her eaglets. Round and round she flew. Now and then she would charge with lightning speed toward Tonweya and the young birds. The two eaglets flapped their wings wildly and called out to her. Finally in despair the mother eagle made one more swoop toward her nest, and then screaming defiantly, flew off and disappeared. Night fell and the stars came out. Tonweya was alone on the ledge with the two little birds.

"When the sun came up, Tonweya was very tired. He had not slept during the night. The ledge was so narrow, he was afraid he might roll off if he fell asleep. The sun rose high in the heavens and then started its descent into the west. Soon it would be night. Tonweya looked forward with dread to the lonely vigil he must again keep. He was very hungry and so terribly thirsty.

"The second day Tonweya noticed a small spruce growing in a cleft of the rocks some four feet above him. He tied a piece of his rope to this tree and he fastened the other end around his waist. That way even if he stumbled, he would not fall off the ledge. More important still, he could chance some sleep, which he needed badly.

"The third day passed as the others had; heat, hunger, unquenchable thirst. The hope that some of his people might come in search of him was gone. Even if they came, they would never think of looking for him on the cliffs. The mother of the eaglets did not return. Tonweya's presence had frightened her away.

"By this time the two eaglets, seeing that Tonweya had no intention of hurting them, had made friends with him. They allowed Tonweya to touch them at will. Tonweya could see that they were as hungry as he was, so taking out his knife he cut small pieces from the rawhide rope and fed them. This act of kindness removed the last vestige of fear they might have had. They played all about him. They allowed him to

hold them aloft. They flapped their wings bravely as he lifted them toward the sun. As he felt the upward pull of their wings, there came to him an idea. Since he had no wings of his own, why could he not make use of the wings of his eagle brothers? He raised his arms toward the sky and called upon Wakan-tanka for wisdom.

"The night of the third day, the one on which he had fed the eaglets for the first time, was raw and chill. When Tonweya stretched out for what little sleep he could get, he shivered with the cold. As if understanding his need, the two little eaglets left their nest and coming over to where he lay nestled their warm, fluffy bodies close beside him. In a few moments Tonweya was asleep.

"While he was asleep, he dreamed. In his dream Wakan-tanka spoke to him. He told him to be brave, the two eaglets would save him. Tonweya awoke suddenly. The eagles were still beside him. As they felt him move, they nestled even closer to him. He placed his arms around them. He knew that his time to die had not yet come. He would once more see his people. He was no longer afraid.

"For days thereafter Tonweya fed the rawhide rope to his eagle friends. Luckily it was a long rope, for it was, of course, almost a whole buffalo hide. But while the eaglets thrived on it and grew larger and stronger each day, Tonweya grew thinner and weaker. It rained one day and water gathered in the hollows of the rocks on the ledge. Still he was very hungry and thirsty. He tried to think only of caring for the eaglets.

"Each day Tonweya would hold them up by their legs and let them try their wings. Each day the pull on his arms grew stronger. Soon it was so powerful it almost lifted him from his feet. He knew the time was coming for him to put his idea into action. He decided he must do it quickly, for weak as he was he would be unable to do it after a few more days.

"The last of the rawhide was gone, the last bit of water on the ledge was drunk. Tonweya was so weak, he could hardly

stand. With an effort he dragged himself upright and called his eagle brothers to him. Standing on the edge of the ledge he called to Wakan-tanka for help. He grasped the eaglets' legs in each hand and closing his eyes he jumped.

"For a moment he felt himself falling, falling. Then he felt the pull on his arms. Opening his eyes he saw that the two eagles were flying easily. They seemed to be supporting his weight with little effort. In a moment they had reached the ground. Tonweya lay there too exhausted, too weak to move. The eagles remained by his side guarding him.

"After resting awhile Tonweya slowly made his way to a little stream nearby. He drank deeply of its cool water. A few berries were growing on the bushes there. He ate them ravenously. Strengthened by even this little food and water, he started off in the direction of the camp. His progress was slow, for he was compelled to rest many times. Always the eaglets remained by his side guarding him.

"On the way he passed the spot where he had killed the buffalo. The coyotes and vultures had left nothing but bones. However





his bow and arrows were just where he had left them. He managed to kill a rabbit upon which he and his eagle friends feasted. Late in the afternoon he reached the camp, only to find that his people had moved on. It was late. He was very tired so he decided to stay there that night. He soon fell asleep, the two eagles pressing close beside him all night.

"The sun was high in the sky when Tonweya awoke. The long sleep had given him back much strength. After once more giving thanks to Wakan-tanka for his safety he set out after his people. For two days he followed their trail. He lived on the roots and berries he found along the way and what little game he could shoot. He shared everything with his eagle brothers, who followed him. Sometimes they flew overhead, sometimes they walked behind him, and now and then they rested on his shoulders.

"Well along in the afternoon of the second day he caught up with the band. At first they were frightened when they saw him. Then they welcomed him with joy.

"They were astonished at his story. The two eagles who never left Tonweya amazed them. They were glad that they had always been kind to Wanbli and had never killed them.

"The time came when the eagles were able to hunt food for themselves and though everyone expected them to fly away, they did not. True, they would leave with the dawn on hunting forays, but when the evening drew near, they would fly back fearlessly and enter Tonweya's tipi, where they passed the night. Everyone marveled at the sight.

"But eagles, like men, should be free. Tonweya, who by now understood their language, told them they could go. They were to enjoy the life the Great Mystery, Wakan-tanka, had planned for them. At first they refused. But when Tonweya said if he ever needed their help he would call for them, they consented.

"The tribe gave a great feast in their honor. In gratitude for all they had done Tonweya painted the tips of their wings a bright red to denote courage and bravery. He took them up on a high mountain. He held them once more toward the sky and bidding them good-bye released them. Spreading their wings they soared away. Tonweya watched them until they disappeared in the eye of the sun.

"Many snows have passed and Tonweya has long been dead. But now and then the eagles with the red-tipped wings are still seen. There are always two of them and they never show any fear of people. Some say they are the original sacred eagles of Tonweya, for the Wanbli lives for many snows. Some think they are the children of the sacred ones. It is said whoever sees the red-tipped wings of the eagles is sure of their protection as long as he is fearless and brave. And only the fearless and brave may wear the eagle feather tipped with red."

When Tasinagi finished the story, he looked to see if the red-winged eagles were still following them. They were there. He knew then that his son Chano was one of those to be blessed by great good in his life.

